



A Thousand Terrible Things by AlbusSeverusP0tter

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Summary: The Demadog Dustin had stored in his freezer, hoping that it would bring him the glory of a "new" discovery, turns out not to be dead, & escapes as Will begins to reveal his feelings for Mike. (Set a month after the events in Stranger Things 2) (Was originally going to focus a Will/Mike ship, but I've since decided to focus more on the plot. Their relationship is still of import)

1. Chapter 1: A Thousand Terrible Things

-Wassup? So I just finished watching Stranger Things 2, like, 30 minutes before I started writing this, and I reeeeeaaaalllllyyyy ship Mike and Will. It's just so perfect! The way Mike holds Will's hand to calm him down, the way he tears up when he recalls how they met (he even says that asking Will to be his friend was "the best thing I've ever done"), the fact that they're always staring into each other's eyes, and even the fact that the only one Will trusted to tell about his experiences with True Sight into the Upside Down was Mike.

So I'm writing this fanfic set about a month after the end of Stranger Things 2 that's kind of a romance between them. I have an idea of a real plot, though, so people who don't ship Will and Mike may enjoy this too. But fair warning that I'm only writing this because I really ship it, I'm fanboying super hard (hi, I'm gay), I'm young enough that it's not creepy, and I can't sleep. Anyway, enjoy!

P. s. Just because I ship Byke or Mill or whatever the frak Will and Mike's ship name is, doesn't mean I don't ship Mike and Eleven. I actually ship them a lot, it's just that since I'm gay, I don't know how to write a straight relationship, and I relate more to Mike and Will.

"SHE CAN'T DO THAT! TELL HER SHE CAN'T do that!" Dustin shouted, shaking his head so fast that his blue and white baseball cap threatened to fly off his curly hair.

"Calm down, dude" said Lucas, the corners of his lips twitching slightly. "Just because we haven't done it before doesn't mean it can't be done."

"Oh, that's right, stick up for your girlfriend" Dustin huffed.

Mike was watching them bicker patiently. He knew it wasn't a big deal. Those two always argued during DnD.

Mike ran a hand through his relatively short black hair, and leaned back to examine his party.

His eyes first sought out Eleven, the Mage of their party, and Mike's not-so-secret girlfriend.

She hadn't had much time in the real world. For most of her life, she'd been "raised" (if you could call it that) by scientists who poked, prodded, and tested her 24/7 at Hawkins Lab in the middle of the woods.

Because Eleven, or Elle as her friends called her, had superpowers. She could move things with her mind, locate anyone, wherever they happened to be, and even seemed to have the power to open and close gates to the Upside Down, an alternate hell dimension where monsters prowled in search of a way to our world.

Elle had escaped from the lab around a year and a half ago, maybe less. She had met Mike and his friends, and fought with them against a Demogorgan- one of the monsters from the Upside Down- but in the process of defeating it she had been sucked into that parallel world.

She hadn't been there for long, though. She had managed to escape from that place, too, almost as soon as she'd arrived there, and had spent the remaining part of the last year hiding with Police Chief Hopper.

And now she was enjoying (well, hopefully enjoying) her first ever game of DnD. Mike was fairly certain she was cheating. The only thing she seemed to understand about it was that when you needed to roll a die, you needed to roll a high number. And roll high numbers she would! When they weren't outright critical rolls, they were in the upper teens. What was more was that Elle kept wiping her nose suspiciously with her sleeve.

Mike's best friend Will caught his eye and winked, signaling he had caught Elle at it too. Mike smiled warmly back to him.

Will was short and skinny as a matchstick. He had brown hair that fell around his head in a bowl-like shape. He had piercing eyes, and a face that was somehow both sharp and soft at the same time.

Will had gone through more than anyone. He had been trapped in the Upside Down for what felt like years to everyone involved. And when

he finally escaped, it was only to become an involuntary spy for the Mind Flayer, a massive shadow monster that began to manifest itself and the Upside Down in Hawkins (until Elle stopped it), thanks to it infecting him with some sort of virus.

Neither Mike nor Will would tell anyone about Elle's cheating. Mike didn't want to get his girlfriend angry or frustrated, and Will was too quiet these days to purposefully point out something that would spark a fight.

Lucas, an average-sized dark boy with very short hair, cleared his throat, and Mike was pulled back into reality. He looked over at his friend, who raised an eyebrow and nodded his head across the table at Max.

"So, Mike. You're the DM. . . is she allowed to do that?"

Mike blinked in surprise. He hadn't paid attention to the argument, and had no clue what it was Max had done.

Max was the newest member of their party. The red-haired girl had arrived in Hawkins around three months ago, and immediately caught Mike, Will, Lucas, and Dustin's attention. Not only was she impossibly good at arcade games, hilariously sarcastic, and very smart, but she was perfectly capable of handling herself, was relatively nerdy, and could drive a car. In other words, she was a geek's dream girl.

"You just going to stare at me, Mike, or are you going to make up your mind?" Max said with a hint of sarcasm as she crossed her arms.

"Oh! R-right! Sorry, I was just thinking. Ummm, could you walk me through what happened again?"

Max rolled her eyes, but Mike could tell it was just a mask. She was glad to finally have a group of friends to hang out with. . . Like a normal person.

"So we're facing those three Gorgons, right? And since you can't look into their eyes-"

"Actually, Gorgons don't have stone sight, just Medusa" Dustin

interrupted.

Max turned and looked at him. "Alright, since I THOUGHT you couldn't look at them, probably due to the fact that when I asked what a Gorgon was, some nerd with a baseball cap told me they were 'basically like Medusa', and since you guys were cornered by them, I used my lasso, caught all of you, and started driving away on my horse."

"But she CAN'T do that!" Dustin insisted. "Because we got dragged half a mile over rocks, and since for some reason I was on the bottom, I have to roll for an armor damage check, and I'll need to roll at least an 18 because of how far I got dragged! And I just bought this armor! It's enchanted and everything!"

Mike blinked. "Ummm, I mean, even though it's clear this was a misunderstanding, she already rolled for the lasso, and we all know that the rule is once you role, you can't undo."

"But who said she could drag us along like that anyways? And how would she be strong enough to pull all of us?" Dustin winced.

"Um, hello, I'm your Zoomer, remember? Plus, I have excellent strength without the magical pendant that doubles it. And this is the game you told me had 'limitless possibilities', right?" Max said, adopting somewhat of a lisp. "This is the game where 'you can do basically anything', yeah?"

Dustin scowled, but didn't press the subject anymore. He instead morosely picked up a D20 and rolled it across the parchment-covered table.

"Aw, shit! Son of a bitch!" He moaned. "A 16! I was so close!"

He picked up a pencil, and began erasing his armor from his handwritten character sheet.

"Why don't any of you have to roll?" He asked grouchyly.

"Because we were safe and sound laying on top of you while you took all the damage!" Lucas laughed.

"Alright, but we still failed the campaign. We got no gold, the Gorgons are still out there, and now I need new armor, because some son of a bitch didn't pay attention!"

"Mouth breather" said Elle unexpectedly, staring at Dustin before giving Max a small smile. The two girls had grown closer once Elle realized that Max wasn't trying to get with Mike.

Dustin rolled his eyes, checked his watch, and jumped in surprise.

"Oh, shit! It's 10:00! I'm supposed to be home, let's see, in five minutes!"

Lucas nearly spilled the drink he was taking a sip of. "Why didn't you say anything sooner?! I have to be home by 10:30!"

There came the sound of a car honking from outside Mike's house. Nobody knew who's car it was, so everyone but Will, who was spending the night at Mike's house (they had tried getting Mike's parents to let more people stay over, but they said only one was allowed) and Mike stood up and began cleaning their spaces and packing away their things.

Lucas ran over to the window and peeked out into the driveway.

"Elle, that's your ride. Hopper's here. And so's your brother, Max."

Max swung her bag over her shoulder, and walked over to the door.

"See you at school on Monday, Stalker" she said to Lucas before smiling and pulling him to to a quick kiss. Dustin groaned somewhere behind Mike.

Max waved at the rest of them, called "bye, guys", picked up her skateboard, and ran out the door. Lucas and Dustin quickly followed her, picking up their bikes from the front lawn, and riding off towards their respective houses.

"Mike" came Elle's hushed voice from behind him. The black-haired boy turned around and looked at her. She had let her hair grow out somewhat, but Mike knew she would cut it if it got too long. Right now, her curly locks were hanging just above her shoulders.

She had put all her DnD stuff in a small tan bag resting on the floor by her feet.

"Hey, Eleven!" Mike smiled as he stood up and walked over to her, taking her hands in his. "You sure you have to leave?"

She nodded, then gestured toward the door. "My ride is here."

Mike nodded too, then leaned forward and placed a gentle, precious kiss on her lips. She put her hands on his waist, and smiled as they pulled out of the kiss.

"Did you like playing Dungeons and Dragons with us?" Mike asked.

"I think so. . . I wasn't sure how it worked. . . But isn't it basically what we do all the time?"

Mike grinned. "Yeah, I suppose it is. And we've used stuff from DnD to fight against the Upside Down a few times."

"I remember. The Demagorgan, true sight, and the Mind Flayer." Elle grinned. She opened her mouth to say something else, but was interrupted by Hopper honking again.

"I have to go" Elle whispered.

"I know. . . Safe drive. . . " Mike mentally slapped himself at how lame he sounded. *safe drive?*

But Elle giggled slightly, leaned in, and kissed Mike again. He closed his eyes and held onto her tight.

Hopper honked again, and Mike's dad shouted "is someone gonna get that?" From his room.

Elle pulled away from Mike. "See you at school Monday?"

"Yeah, definitely!"

Elle smiled, picked up her bag, then hurried past Mike and out the door. Mike listened to the sound of the car door opening and closing, and then to the car pulling out down the lane.

Mike sighed and turned to face Will. The brown-haired boy was staring curiously at Mike, as though he had been watching him and Elle, and wanted to say something.

Will cleared his throat, and Mike's muscles tensed up.

"So. . . What so you want to do?"

Mike relaxed. He was imagining it. There was no conflict, just his best friend.

"Star Wars marathon?"

Will jumped up. "Hell yeah! I'll pop popcorn! You get the blankets!"

"Dude, you need to lay off Max" Lucas said as he peddled down a dark street next to Dustin.

"What do you mean?! It's not like I'm purposefully treating her bad. I just got pissed because she broke my brand new armor. We could totally have taken those Gorgons!"

"That's not what I mean, man. I know why you were mad. Hell, I would've been pissed too. But it's so obvious that you still like her. And I'm fine with that. I've known you longer than her, and I don't want anything to get in the way of our relationship, but Max can tell too, and it's making her uncomfortable."

A flash of anger went through Dustin. Yes, he still liked Max, but he had actually been trying to make sure she didn't know. He had been trying to prevent exactly what Lucas said was happening.

The two boys rode silently for a minute. When they were less than two minutes away from Lucas's street, the black boy sighed and spoke again.

"I know you're not doing it on purpose. . . Just. . . Try not to groan or roll your eyes every time we kiss, OK?"

Dustin nodded.

"Don't worry, man. You'll find some beautiful girl who likes you. I mean, it's like you said. Who can resist those pearls, eh?!"

Lucas chuckled slightly, and a grin rose on Dustin's face too.

"Thanks, man. I'll keep all that in mind."

Lucas nodded, waved goodbye, then turned and rode his bike down his street, leaving Dustin alone with his thoughts and the night.

People kept telling him that some girl would realize how cool he was, and yet he was still the only party member without a girlfriend or boyfriend. Eleven and Mike had each other, Max and Lucas had each other. Even Will seemed to have some sort of on again/off again thing with the girl he'd met at the school dance last month.

Even Dustin's new cat seemed to prefer his mom. His old cat had liked him well enough, but it was long gone. Dart, the Pollywog-like creature Dustin had found maybe 2 1/2 months ago, then nurtured until it molted and revealed itself to actually be a baby Demagorgan, had eaten the last cat.

Of course, Dart turned out to not be all bad. He had trusted and liked Dustin enough to spare him and his friends when they were cornered by him after burning part of the Upside Down's tunnels that had manifested under Hawkins.

As Dustin road uphill towards his house, his thoughts took him to the thing he had stashed away that could solve all of his problems.

Dart had grown into a doglike adolescent Demagorgan that Dustin had termed 'Demadog'. And Dart wasn't alone. Only a couple of months back, the Mind Flayer had sent a pack of Demadogs to kill Dustin and his friends, but Elle had showed up after almost a year of being missing, killed the Demadogs, saved everyone, then gone and thwarted the Mind Flayer's plans.

And Dustin, seeing the possible fame and glory of a "new" scientific discovery, had snatched up one of the dead Demadog's bodies and put it into a freezer.

The freezer had perfectly preserved the Demadog's body, leaving it

untouched by the effects of the Mind Flayer's defeat, which had caused the other Demadogs to rot and die.

Dustin had transported the carcass into the deep freezer in his storm shelter, and it was still there, waiting to make him famous!

So caught up in his dream was he that Dustin nearly rode right past his house. He dimly became aware that he was passing the driveway, and turned his bike sharply, and rolled up to the front door.

Dustin had barely opened the door before his mom came running up, her curly light brown hair bouncing, and her new kitten held tightly in her arms.

"Oh, Dustin! There you are! You were supposed to be home 20 minutes ago!"

"I know, mom, I'm sorry. I just lost track of time."

"Well, I have a couple of chores for you to do before you get to bed, ok hun?"

Dustin nodded. "What d'you want me to do?"

"Take out the kitchen trash, then run down to the deep freezer and bring up a few of those boxes of pancakes and waffles we bought a few weeks ago. We've run out here, and if you want any breakfast. . ."
" she trailed off.

"No problem, mom" Dustin said, turning to the kitchen garbage can, and heaving the trash bag out. He was just glad not to be grounded for being late.

"I'd go get them myself, but I really don't trust my balance on those steep steps at night" called Dustin's mom as she headed into the living room.

"It's fine, mom!" Dustin called back as he headed out the front door to the trash bin, which had been the place where he'd originally discovered Dart. He quickly tossed the trash bag inside, then ran back into the house to grab a flashlight.

He found one in the kitchen, then hurried out the back door, down the steps, and over to the doors to the storm shelter. . . The already open doors, that is.

"What the hell?" Dustin muttered, turning on his flashlight and pointing the beam into the woods past his backyard.

Dustin peered through the dimly lit branches, but saw nothing and no one.

Shrugging, he turned back to the doors of the shelter, and began to step down into it, descending the stone steps to the suffocatingly dark bottom.

His footsteps echoed hauntingly through the shelter as he walked to the light hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the room. Dustin pulled the cord, and the light sputtered on, filling the room with a dim, flickering yellow light, and bringing the dusty shelves lining the wall into view.

Dustin turned and looked at the deep freezer, which was really just a normal freezer but bigger, pushed against the left wall. It was a white rectangle laying on its side with a door on the top running its entire length. It was only half the length of the wall, and half the height of Dustin himself. The door was closed, but Dustin approached it with caution anyways.

From just beyond the doors to the shelter in Dustin's backyard, there came a loud *SNAP* like a branch being stepped on. The sound split through the silence so absolutely that Dustin felt as though it had come from within *himself*.

Dustin froze, his heart leaping out of his chest. He listened for a minute, but heard nothing else. Dustin slowly stepped toward the freezer, eyes darting around the room, flashlight held high in case he needed to hit. . . *something*. . . with it.

Dustin reached the freezer and tentatively reached out a hand. He placed it on the door and lifted it up slowly, moving the flashlight so it's beam was cast inside the freezer.

"Oh, shit!" Dustin breathed as a wave of cold air and dread washed over him. "Shit shit shit shit shit! God damn son of a bitch!"

He lifted the top all the way up and rested it against the wall. Dustin stared in disbelief at the contents of the freezer.

When he had moved the Demadog into the freezer, he had removed everything from the interior, placed the Demadog at the bottom, covered it with a plastic tarp, and stacked everything back on top of it.

He had been so sure it was dead! What could survive an encounter with Eleven and then two months in a freezer with no air, food, or water?

But as Dustin looked at the shredded boxes of waffles and chicken and ice cream, and the torn ribbons of the plastic tarp, he remembered how Dart had hated the heat lamp above the cage he had been kept in. He remembered how fire and heat had been one of their main weapons against the forces from the Upside Down, how they had burned the parasitic virus that was part of the Mind Flayer out of Will.

And Dustin recalled words Will had spoken from when he was possessed by the Mind Flayer. Not words Dustin had heard personally, but ones that had been repeated to him enough times.

"He likes it cold".

2. Chapter 2: A Question of Lust

Hot damn! Chapter one received waaaayyyy better reactions than I thought it would! So, because I have no life, I now present you with chapter two!

DUSTIN GRABBED A COUPLE OF untouched boxes of Eggos, slammed the top of the freezer down, then darted to the center of the shelter, where he tugged on the light chain till the room became pitch black again.

The curly-haired boy hastily turned off his flashlight, and began to creep across the room and up the stone steps.

As Dustin approached the top of the steps, he crouched down on all fours and crept slowly up to the very top step.

He peeked over the stone ridge and looked out into his quiet back yard. It was a dark night. The only sources of light were his dim back porch lights, and the fingernail sliver of white light that was the moon in the sky.

So dark was it that Dustin couldn't even see the tree line of the forest. He sat there for a timeless moment, breath coming out in low, terrified rasps, and he listened for any indication of the escaped Demadog.

He heard nothing, but stayed frozen in place nonetheless. Something had made the *snap* earlier. Sure, it could've been the wind, or even a deer, but somehow Dustin didn't think so.

But one thing was for sure. *I can't just sit here all night and wait for it to get me*, Dustin thought, and he shifted the cold boxes under his arms so that he had a more secure hold on them.

Dustin stood up slowly and turned the flashlight back on. He stepped quietly out of the doorway to the shelter, and turned to face his house.

Somewhere in the dark behind him a bush rustled loudly. Dustin let out a strangled cry and started running flat out towards his back porch.

"Shit!" He shouted in fear. "God damn son of a bitch! Shit shit shit!"

Dustin flew across the yard, up the steps, and over to his porch. He threw the door open, flashed inside, and slammed it shut, panting heavily.

"Dustin! Honey, what's the matter?" Called his mom from the living room.

"Uhhhh. . . N-nothing!" Dustin gasped as he shakily slid the door lock into place.

Dustin rushed across the kitchen and threw the boxes of Eggos into the freezer.

"Um, mom, did you try to go down into the shelter earlier?"

"No, Hun, I've been up here all day. Why?"

"Uh, it looks like the raccoons got in there. Most of our food is gone."

"Damn! Again? I should really start putting a lock on that door."

Dustin walked into the living room, heart still beating furiously.

"Mom, I'm gonna head on to bed, OK?"

"Alright, sweetie. Goodnight. Love you!"

"Love you too!" Dustin blew a quick kiss, then ran as quietly as he could to his bedroom. He slid the door shut as he entered, locked it, and collapsed down onto his bed.

how could I let it escape!?!, he thought. *how was it even alive in the first place?*

I have to warn the others, Dustin decided. He reached across to his bedside table, and picked up a jumble of cords and microphones. He

took off his hat, slammed his headset on, and turned on the long-range radio.

"Hello? This is Dustin. I have a code red! Does anybody read me?"

Nothing but static.

"This is Dustin! I repeat: code red! Code red! Does anybody copy? Over."

Still static. Dustin sighed and fell back onto his bed, rubbing his eyes. Surely there was some mistake? It was definitely dead, right?

But he knew it wasn't. The Demadog had survived. There was no telling how many people it had already killed!

"Dustin, is that you? Over."

Dustin jumped to his feet, heart racing.

"Lucas! Thank God! We're in serious shit! Over." Dustin said into his headset.

"Is this about you being late, cuz that wasn't my fault. Over."

"Not that kind of shit, dumbass! I mean Upside Down kind of shit. Over."

There was a pause, then "are- are you. . . You're joking, right?"

"Wish I was. Listen, we need to warn Mike and Will. Knowing those two, they're still awake watching Star Wars together or something. Can you sneak out and meet me on the corner of your street in ten minutes?"

"Ummm. . . Alright. . ."

"Awesome. Keep your radio with you. I'll explain what happened on my way to meet you. And then we're going to go get Mike and Will."

Dustin crammed his hat back on his head, then wandered over to his closet. He began to rummage around in it. After his experience with

the Demadogs last time round, he'd decided to take a leaf out of Steve's, Mike's sister Nancy's ex, book.

"There you are" he muttered as he lifted up a baseball bat with dozens of nails driven into to. He unzipped his backpack, places the spiked side of the bat into it carefully. He zipped it up, strode over to his window, and slid it open.

"Ok, Lucas, I'm on my way over to you" Dustin muttered into his headset. He then climbed out of the window, and into the night.

Will was smiling for once. He and Mike were huddled under a blanket on the couch, eating popcorn and watching the end of *Star Wars: A New Hope*.

"Here comes Han!" Mike said, sitting up, eyes gleaming. "Turns out he cares about the rebellion after all."

Will grabbed a fistful of popcorn and thrust it into his mouth.

"Kinda reminds me of Elle showing up at the last minute and taking out all those Demadogs."

"Oh, so we're really calling them that now, are we?" Mike giggled and poked Will under the blanket.

Will laughed back. "Yeah, the name's kinda grown on me. You know?"

Will nodded, and turned back to the TV. He was happy to be with Mike. For some reason, he was just easy to be around. He almost always seemed to be on the same page as Will, and he understood what Will had gone through.

Will's smile slid away. He had had something eating at him for a while, something concerning Mike, and now that they were alone, he knew he had to tell him.

"Mike. . . I uhm, I haven't said this to anyone, but. . . When you were interrogating me. . . When I was under the control of the Mind Flayer. . . I remember everything you said."

Mike looked over at Will, his mouth open slightly.

"Y-you do?"

Will nodded. "I remember what you said about. . . About how asking me to. . . to be your friend was the best thing you'd ever done."

Will's voice shook, and he looked back at Mike, who was staring at him with a mixture of care and worry on his face.

"I'm glad you remember it, Will. You're my best friend. . . And when I see you down, it hurts me. Sometimes you need to know that. . . that you're loved."

Will took a shuddering breath, and hugged Mike tightly. The Byers boy buried his face in Mike's chest.

Mike rubbed Will's back consolingly. He gazed at the TV, where Darth Vader's ship was shot.

"Will, you know I'll always be there for you, right? No matter what."

Will looked up. There were thin tear tracks going down his face.

"Not. . . not always . . ."

"What do you mean?" Mike asked, perplexed and concerned. But Will just shook his head and wiped away the tears.

Mike opened his mouth, determined to find out what was wrong, but at that moment there came an urgent yet quiet knocking from the front door.

Mike looked quizzically at Will. Who could that possibly be? It was past 11 at night.

Mike stood up, and motioned for Will to follow him. The two boys tiptoed across to the front door.

They stood before it for a moment, looking at each other. Will shrugged, and Mike turned and grabbed the doorknob.

The door swung open, and Mike's mouth fell open.

"Lucas? *Dustin?!* what are you doing here?!" Mike hissed.

"We're in deep shit!" Dustin said loudly.

"Keep it down!" Mike whispered through gritted teeth. "I'm not supposed to have anyone else over! And what do you mean 'we're in deep shit'?"

"Actually, it was Dustin specifically who got us in deep shit" Lucas said quietly. "Again. Can we come in? We really need to talk."

Mike and Will stepped aside to let their friends in. Dustin gazed into the living room and grinned.

"See! What'd I say? Star Wars!" He said, pointing at the TV.

"Make yourself useful and go pause it!" Mike hissed. Dustin complied, walking into the family room and picking up the remote. He caught sight of the blanket and grinned.

"Awww, were you two snuggling?"

"Shut up, asshole! Alright, everyone follow me" Mike said, waving his hand over his shoulder as he started to walk towards the basement stairway.

The three other boys followed him sneakily. They descended the staircase to a surprisingly cozy room lit with warm orange lights.

"Ok, what happened?" Mike asked, turning to Lucas and Dustin.

"So. . . You know how a couple of months ago, we took Will into the tool shed and tied him up because of the Mind Flayer being able to use him as a spy?" Dustin said, diving right in.

"Uhhhh. . . Yeah" Mike said, shooting a glance over to Will, who's face was blank.

"Are you saying this has something to do with the Mind Flayer?"

"Sort of" Lucas said with a grimace. "Go on, Dustin, tell them what you did."

"Well, when Will realized where he was, the Mind Flayer sent all those Demadogs after us, yeah? But then Elle showed up and saved all of us."

"I don't see where this is going" Mike said, frowning.

"Well, I saw a chance for a 'new' scientific discovery, so Steve and I took one of the Demadog corpses, stuck it in Will's freezer, then transported it to my deep freezer in my storm shelter after Elle closed the gate."

"You stored one of those things in my freezer?!" Will said.

"Wait," Lucas interrupted, "I thought all the Demadogs rotted after the gate closed?"

"They did. Maybe the cold of the freezer protected it from the effects or something?" Dustin replied. Will shook his head, but said nothing.

"So, um, I thought it was dead, right? Cuz what could survive Elle, then the gate closing, then two months without food? But then it clawed its way out of my freezer. . . "

"Oh, shit!" Mike said, putting his hands on the back of his head. "Shit! How the hell. . . ? It wasn't dead?"

"Either it's alive and on the loose, or my neighborhood raccoons were craving frozen Demadog meat."

"But. . . They aren't supposed to be alive without some connection to the Upside Down! And Elle closed the gate, so there isn't one. . . Unless a new one opened?"

Will cleared his throat. The other three turned to look at him.

"It. . . It might have a connection. . . Without the gate" he said, staring at his shoes.

"What d'you mean?" The other three said together.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you guys. . . But when mom, Jonathan, and Nancy took me to Hopper's cabin and burned the Mind Flayer's parasite, or virus or whatever it was out of me, it. . . it didn't die. It flew away into the night. Broke the door down and everything."

"Ooohhhh, shit!" Dustin said, mimicking Mike and placing his hands on the back of his head. "Son of a bitch! It has a connection! And I kept it preserved long enough for it to heal!"

"We have to tell Eleven!" Mike said. "She can help us find the Demadog."

"And we need to tell Max and Hopper" Lucas added. "It's not too late to stop it. If we can find it and kill it before it molts into a full-grown Demagorgan, we could save people's lives."

"Let's go!" Mike said, moving towards the stairs.

"Wh- now?!" Lucas said incredulously.

"Yes now! We need to-!"

There came a sudden *THUMP THUMP THUMP* from above them. The four friends froze and stared at the ceiling. A light in the corner of the room flickered, and Will let out a strangled gasp.

The thumping started again. It was moving around the house. Someone- or *something*- was searching through the house.

The thumps moved towards the stairs. It knew where they were. . . It was coming for them!

3. Chapter 3: A Question of Trust

Well shit! I did not expect people to actually like this fanfic, and boy was I wrong! Anyway, I have so much fun writing this that even if people hated it I'd keep doing it. So, continuing our pattern of a chapter a day, here's three!

ELEVEN FOUND HERSELF IN THE DARK. It was a familiar place. This was where she went when she used her powers to locate people.

The ground was a thin layer of ebony water. There were no walls, only a dark, horizonless void. A white light was shining down upon Eleven and the water from an unseen source.

Why am I here? thought Eleven. The last thing she remembered was climbing into her bed at Jim Hopper, the police chief and her adoptive father's cabin. And upon looking down, Eleven saw that she was wearing the same yellow pajamas that she had worn to bed.

From somewhere in the blackness behind her, Eleven heard a sound that sent ice cold spears of fear running through her heart. It was like some sort of high-pitched gurgling, but nothing about it was human. The word that came to mind was "amphibian", even though Eleven knew almost nothing about them.

Yet she knew what the sound was, and it filled her with a sense of dread. But she turned to face its source anyway.

She saw nothing but black at first, until, squinting, her eyes rested on a small, pale dot off in the distance.

The sound cut through the void around Eleven again. She forced her shaking legs to walk towards it. The dot grew in size at an alarmingly rapid pace, considering the speed (or lack thereof) at which Eleven was walking. It was almost as though the thing in the distance was running towards her at the same time she was approaching it.

It's OK, Eleven told herself. *It can't touch me here. It can't see me. And if I touch it, it'll turn to smoke like all the others*.

Her legs stopped wobbling somewhat, and she was able to take greater strides towards the thing. The sounds of her bare feet splashing through the water resounded infinitely out into the void.

The creature made the sound again. Eleven could now see it moving. It was indeed heading in her direction, but at a pace that still didn't amount for the distance towards each other the two had traveled in the last minute.

And suddenly it was in full, clear view. Eleven's breath caught in her throat, and she resisted the urge to cry out.

It was as she had feared. A great big Demadog. It was large as a grown Pitt Bull, with four slimy legs ending not in paws, but in long, hand like claws, sharp and pointed. It had somewhat of a tail wriggling behind it, and a face with no visible eyes, but instead had a four-way mouth that Eleven knew could split open, revealing hundreds of razor sharp teeth.

The whole thing was completely hairless, and it moved with ease. But something about it was wrong. All the Demadogs Eleven had seen so far were of a sickly green color, with various yellow spots all over their bodies. But this one was pale as moonlight, and didn't have a spot in sight.

And as Eleven walked around to its side to try and get a better look at it, she suddenly realized it wasn't alone. She had almost missed its companion, which was as black as everything else in the void. Only the random white glints jumping across itself as it caught the light from the unseen source tipped Eleven off that it existed at all.

And quite a curious creature it was, too. For it was a shapeless, ever-shifting black mass. It looked like a floating transition between a gas and a liquid.

Eleven stepped closer to it, eyes wide, whole body shaking. It looked . . . familiar. . .

And then she realized she knew what it was- or at least where it had come from. For Eleven had seen it- or something eerily similar to it- before! And with that realization, she gasped aloud.

The Demadog snapped its head around to look at her. Had it heard her gasp!? Surly not! Neither of them were physically manifested in this void.

But it let out an earsplitting shriek, opened the four flaps of its mouth, revealing row after row of triangular teeth, and took a step towards Eleven.

With a cry, Eleven stumbled backwards. She turned and ran as fast as she could, but knew it was hopeless when she heard the Demadog pounding along just behind her, gaining speed.

But she couldn't stop. Eleven had no idea where to run to, or even if this void held a place to hide in, but she just knew that she needed to run.

And suddenly, Eleven slipped on the slick, watery surface of the void, and fell hard onto her back.

Tears were streaming down her face, and she scuttled around to look at the beast bearing down on her.

Eleven lifted a hand and tried to use her powers to fling the Demadog backwards, but nothing happened.

The monster lunged through the air, front claws stretched out. It slammed hard into Eleven, something that should NOT have been possible. The force of the collision pushed her head back down to crack sickeningly on the hard floor.

Eleven's vision blurred, and she became extremely dizzy. She dimly saw the Demadog lift one of its clawed hands, and slash it across her chest. A second later, she felt the pain of her chest splitting open.

Eleven let out a long, high, pain-filled shriek that cut through the void like nothing else had done. The pain was unbearable! The front of Eleven's yellow pajamas was turning crimson at an alarming rate. And Eleven couldn't stop screaming as she watched the Demadog's face open to receive her.

"ELLE?! Elle, wake up! ELLE! ELEVEN?! JANE!?"

Eleven opened her eyes, and a blinding light met her. She squinted and saw Hopper standing over her, yelling over her screams and shaking her.

Elle was safe! She was in her room in Hopper's cabin. She quieted down, but kept gasping and heaving racking sobs. Her eyes clouded up again, this time from tears.

Hopper stopped shaking her, and sat down on Eleven's bed, making shushing noises. Eleven continued shivering as though she was standing naked in a snowstorm, however.

"Elle. . . What happened? What's wrong?" He asked, trying to sound soothing, although his voice shook almost as much as Eleven.

Eleven shook her head and reached up to wipe away the tears. But it wasn't enough. The sobs and the tears kept coming. She couldn't understand how she had been hurt in the dream, or the void, or whatever that place was. Nobody else had been able to stay solid after touching her in there.

And then Eleven became aware that she didn't feel any pain. She sat up, and pulled the front of her solid yellow pajamas away from her body, and looked down at her chest.

There was nothing there! Not a scratch! But the impossible pain had felt so real, so intense!

"Come here, kid," Hopper muttered, holding out an arm. Eleven looked up into his grouchy yet kind face, with its bushy beard, and she dove forward, burying her face in his warm chest.

Hopper wrapped her in a tight, warm, calming embrace, and the tears came full force. Eleven all but screamed into his chest, and her body shook harder than before.

"It's OK, Elle. Nothing can hurt you here. And I won't ever let anything hurt you. I promise. And friends. . . friends don't lie."

4. Chapter 4: 2AM Drive to Nowhere

Hey, guys, girls, and my non-binary, fluid, and neutral peeps! Sorry it took longer to put this chapter out. Been busy with school stuff. I'm still in awe at the reactions this has gotten! And I know the fic has been kinda dull so far, but trust me when I say that in this chapter, shit happens! This is a long chapter, but stick with it ;-) I won't let you down.

Anyway, feel free to leave a comment asking me questions, telling what you liked and didn't like, making suggestions, or just o fanboy/girl with me! Here's chapter four! Enjoy!

WILL, DUSTIN, MIKE, AND LUCAS JUMPED with every **thump** from above.

"Are you sure it's not your parents? Or Nancy?" Dustin whisper I Mike as he swung his backpack off his shoulders.

Mike shook his head. "They all went to bed when Will and I started A New Hope. And I know what all their footsteps sound like from down here."

Dustin grimaced, then unzipped his backpack and pulled out the large, spikey, nail-covered baseball bat.

"Dude! What the hell?!" Mike hissed.

Dustin opened his mouth, but quickly froze. There was movement from the top of the staircase.

Dustin raised his bat, ready to strike. The other three boys raised their shaking fists, looks of fear crossing their faces.

Mike noticed Will looked the most terrified. His eyes were wide, and his breaths were coming in quick bursts. Mike walked quickly over to him, and pushed the smaller boy behind him. Will seemed to relax slightly.

Mike tried to give Will a reassuring look, but his attention was drawn

away as someone began to descend the staircase.

A large pair of boots appeared on the steps, followed by legs clad in blue jeans.

"Mike, are you down there?" Came a hushed, familiar voice.

From out of the shadows came Police Chief Jim Hopper.

"What the f-!?" Mike began, but his words were drowned by a loud **CLANG** as Dustin dropped the nail-bat with relief.

"What are the rest of you doing here? I thought it was just supposed to be Will and Mike?" Hopper asked, looking concerned.

"We had an-" Dustin began, but Hopper cut him off.

"It doesn't matter. Listen, about an hour ago, maybe a little more, Elle and I got home. I put her to bed, and fifteen minutes later she's screaming her head off and begging me to find you" Hopper pointed at Mike.

"She won't tell me what's wrong, just that she needs to talk to you all."

"So you break into my house?!" Mike demanded, still slightly shaken.

Hopper strode across the room and put his finger in Mike's face. "My kid, and your girlfriend, I might add, was in serious distress. Something scared her, might have even hurt her, and she wants to talk to you! And for your information, I knocked on your door for a solid minute, but nobody answered! So yeah, you're damn well right I came in uninvited! Elle needs help. I would've thought that you of all people would care about that."

Hopper took a deep breath, and turned away from Mike. He ran his hand through his beard in apparent exasperation.

Mike was staring open-mouthed at Hopper's back, but Will stepped forward and cleared his throat.

"Ummm, so. . . where is she? Elle, I mean?"

Hopper turned to look at Will, and his expression softened somewhat.

"She's outside, waiting in the car."

"The hell are we waiting for, then?! Let's go!" Lucas hissed.

The group began to stomp back up the stairs. Mike flipped the light switch off before following the others, and the basement became dark and gloomy.

"Hey! Why didn't Elle just contact us through the radio?" Dustin whispered to Hopper.

"She did. Or she tried to, anyway, but nobody answered."

Dustin shook his head. "She can't have been on the right channel, then. I've had it open for about an hour, because I was trying to get ahold of the rest of you, and I didn't hear anything from Elle."

Hopper led them through the kitchen, and towards the front door. "Why were you trying to get ahold of everyone?" He asked, opening the door and standing aside to let them through.

"Oh, shit! That's right! Dustin said, slamming his palm onto his forehead. "We need to warn you-"

"Warn me? about what?!" Hopper demanded, shutting the front door firmly, and allowing his voice to raise slightly.

"What did you four do this time?!"

"More like what did Dustin do this time?" Chuckled Lucas.

"Oh, shut up, asshole!" Dustin said, elbowing Lucas in the ribs.

"Hey! What. Did. You. Do?" Hopper growled, bending forward and staring at the four boys.

"Demadog" came a quite voice from behind Hopper.

"Elle!" Mike cried, running past Hopper to embrace the curly-haired girl.

"I told you to wait in the car" Hopper said, but the corners of his mouth twitched upwards nonetheless.

And almost immediately, his faced slipped back into a scowl.

"Did. . . did you say 'Demadog'?" Hopper demanded.

Elle nodded morosely, and Hopper tipped his head back to look at the sky.

"Jesus! Does this have something to do with the thing You were going to warn me about?" Hopper looked fixedly at Dustin.

"Uuuuhhhhh. . . Maybe?" Dustin said, trying and failing to give a reassured smile.

"Dammit, Dustin! What did you do?!"

Dustin gulped. "I kept a Dead Demadog in my freezer and it came back to life and escaped tonight and I don't know where it went!" He said very quickly and in a single breath.

Hopper stared at him angrily. "I'm sorry, did you say that you kept a baby Demagorgan-"

"Demadog" Dustin corrected.

Hopper glared at him. "I'm not calling it that."

Dusting gulped.

"**anyway**," Hopper continued, "you kept a baby Demagorgan at your house, again, and it escaped. . . again!?"

Dustin nodded slowly, and Hopper moaned. "Did that life lesson just fly over your head?"

"I need to talk to Mike!" Elle interrupted, stepping forwards purposefully.

Mike thought she looked like she might be sick. Her forehead was dripping with sweat, and her hands were shaking as if she was

freezing.

But she was looking calmly and pointedly at Mike through darkly ringed eyes. Mike nodded, and she gestured for him to follow her.

Mike vaguely heard the others start arguing again as he walked with Eleven over to Hopper's car.

Elle turned so she was face to face with Mike. Her bottom lip was trembling slightly, and she looked close to tears.

"I saw it. . . The Demadog."

"What?!" Mike gasped. "Where? Are you OK?!"

Elle shook her head. "It. . . it was in my dream. . . In the place I go to find people."

Mike breathed a sigh of relief. "So you're OK, then? Because nothing can see or touch you there, right? That's what you told me. . . "

But again Elle shook her head. "It hurt me M-Mike" Elle gasped, her voice breaking. "It saw me, chased me, and it caught me. . . I felt it cut me open."

Tears began to fall down Elle's face. She drew a line with her finger across her chest.

"Oh my God! But. . . But I don't see any blood!"

"It wasn't real. Except it was, but it wasn't. . . It wasn't . . .?!" Elle scowled as she sought out the word.

"Physical?" Mike suggested, and Elle nodded quickly and rubbed her face with a yellow sleeve.

"The Demadog. . . I think it was close to molting again. It was looking extremely p-pale. Like its skin was dead.

"Shit!" Mike said, giving their surroundings a cautionary once-over.

"And it wasn't alone" Elle said with a deep intake of breath.

Mike went cold. "Y-you mean there's more than one Demadog?!"

Elle shook her head again. "Not a Demadog."

"Then what was it? A full grown Demagorgan?"

"Mind Flayer."

Mike froze. She couldn't be right! She had closed the gate! And if the Mind Flayer was in Hawkins, they would definitely know my now.

"Not. . . Not a full Mind Flayer. . . This was only a cloud. . . A fragment?" Elle looked at Mike quizzically, as though asking him if it was the right word.

"It must be the parasite!" Mike gasped. "When Will was a spy, and they burned the Mind Flayer out of him, whatever it was that was inside him got away. It was still in Hawkins!"

Elle nodded. "Makes sense."

"Don't worry, Hopper, Dustin, Lucas, Max, Will and I will find a way to stop it! We always do! Steve and Jonathan will probably help, too."

"NO!" Elle suddenly looked scared again.

"Wh-what do you mean, 'no'?"

"No means no. Don't go after it!" Elle crossed her arms and planted her feet.

"Why not?! I mean, in the past we were the only reason the Upside Down didn't win! What's different now?"

"We don't have a gate I can close this time. We don't have a way to fight the parasite!"

"So we'll figure it out like we always do."

"NO!" Elle stomped a foot and glared at Mike. "I came here to warn you- stay away from it!"

"But why?" Mike pleaded. "It's not like I want to face it, but when has anyone else stepped up and done the job right?"

"I can't save you this time, Mike! That's why!" Tears started falling down Elle's face again.

"What do you mean?" Mike asked, taking a step towards Elle.

"Every time you get in trouble, I find and save you. . . But I can't anymore. My powers. . . They aren't working right." Elle took a step backwards.

Mikes mouth fell open. "You mean they're gone?"

"No, just. . . Not powerful. I can lift small things, but not for long. I don't know what happened. But if you get in trouble, I'm useless to help."

"Elle, that doesn't matter to me! But I have to do something!"

"NO!"

"Ell-!"

"I said NO!"

Mike reached a hand out to gently take hers, but his hand suddenly froze in midair. Mike stared at it aghast. Elle was panting and grunting. She was clearly straining to keep his hand frozen.

With a loud gasp, Elle fell to her knees. Blood was flowing freely from her nose.

Mike found he could move again, and rushed forwards to help. But she waved him off and clambered to her feet. She wiped away the blood, and glared at Mike.

"Please. . . Don't go after it!"

"I have to!" Mike said, and tears started to roll down his face, too. His hand was stiff and sore after Elle's use of her powers against Mike.

Elle shook her head frantically. "I'm just trying to protect you."

She then strode past Mike heading back to the house. Mike followed her at a distance. The two stomped up to the group, who were still arguing (save for Will, who was standing back by the front door and was watching Mike as he walked back to Hopper and his friends).

"Let's go." Elle said, tugging on Hopper's sleeve.

"Elle, this is a big deal, we need to figure everything out."

"Please, Jim. . . Can we just go?"

Hopper looked at her, a sad smile on his face. "All right, kid. We can go."

Hopper turned back to the party of young nerds. "Don't do anything without me, you understand?" He leaned forward, pointing a finger at each of them in turn.

"Oh, y-yeah! Of course not!" Dustin nodded, eyes wide.

Hopper turned away from them, and led Elle back to his car.

"Dude, what happened?!" Lucas demanded as soon as the doors slammed on Hopper's car.

Mike rubbed his sore wrist, thinking. It was starting to swell slightly.

"We lost our Mage. . . "

"You mean she broke up with you?!" Will asked, eyes wide.

"No, I mean she doesn't have her full powers anymore. She could barely. . . It doesn't matter. Get to the basement, quietly, and I'll fill you in. After that, we're getting Max."

Max awoke suddenly. She rubbed her eyes and squinted over at the red glow of her alarm clock. 2 am?!

Why had she woken up? Max ran a hand through her tangled red

hair, which was a disaster at the current moment from sleep.

tap tap tap. Max sat bolt upright and peered over at her window. It was lit slightly from the sliver of moonlight in the night sky, but all Max could see was a vaguely lumpy shape.

tap tap tap the knocks grew slightly louder. Max rolled out of bed, and crept slowly toward the window. As she grew closer, the lumpy shape came into clearer view, and Max gasped.

She rushed over and pulled the window open.

"Lucas! Mike! Dustin! Will, what the hell are you doing here!?" She hissed. Her breath came out as fog, and Max was suddenly hit by how cold it turned that night.

"We have a code red! We need to talk!" Lucas whispered back.

"What, **n-n-now?!'** Max's teeth chattered.

"Yes, now! It's about the Upside Down. Get a jacket and some shoes, and then come with us."

Max scowled, but turned and dashed across the room. She threw on a denim jacket and a pair of house slippers, then ran back and climbed out the window.

"You better talk fast!" She said.

The Demadog watched as the police car pulled back up to the tiny wooden cabin in the middle of the woods. If it could smile, it would.

It saw the doors open, and a small girl and a large man started walking up to the porch. They entered the house, and a few minutes later the lights flickered out.

The pale beast turned to look at it's ghostly black companion, who was churning unceasingly. The time to strike was drawing near. But first it needed to feed.

Max was shivering. The party was heading back towards Mike's house. They were nearly there, and Max had been filled in on everything that had happened.

"You know, I think the cold is helping with the swelling" Mike joked as he examined his wrist. It was slightly bruised and purple.

"I'm telling you, man, that was not cool of Elle" Dustin said, shaking his head.

"She-she was just. . . Emotional!" Mike defended, but he didn't sound convinced himself.

"Can we hurry up, please?" Max said loudly. "I'm in Pajamas and slippers, you know. And it's gotta be 30 degrees out here."

"Don't worry, it's not much further" Lucas said. "Mike's place is just a couple of blocks that way" he pointed in the direction they were heading.

Crack!

"Did you hear that?!" Will said, eyes widening.

Everyone froze. The sound seemed to have come from the backyard of a dark house on their right.

"Shit!" Dustin whispered. "I left my bat in your basement!" He looked in horror at Mike.

"Hey! Is someone there?!" Max shouted in the direction of the house.

"Ssshhhhh! What are you doing?!" Lucas gasped, looking at her in disbelief.

"Oh, come on! It's probably not the Demadog. And even if it is, there are five of us."

"With no weapons!" Will said, and he tugged on Mike's arm. "Let's go! Those things took out an entire lab, including it's heavily armed security!"

They had just turned back towards Mike's house, when the unmistakeable, unearthly shriek of a Demadog rang out through the cold winter air.

"SON OF A BITCH!" Dustin cried, and he broke into a run.

"Let's get the hell out of here!" Lucas shouted, and he bolted after Dustin.

Mike, Max, and Will followed the other two, running as fast as they could. They distinctly heard a scratching sound from whims them, like a dog trying to climb over a fence.

"I. . Told. . . You!" Mike gasped, glaring at Max.

But they were way ahead of the Demadog. They were less than a block away from Mike's house.

And then Max screamed. Everyone skidded to a stop and turned around.

Mike's mouth fell open in horror. One of Max's slippers had evidently flown off as she ran, resulting in her stumbling and falling hard onto the pavement of the street. Mike could see blood coming from the ripped knees of her pajamas.

And they could all see the dark shape of the Demadog running of towards Max down the street behind her.

"Max! Hold on!" Dustin yelled, and he started to run back towards her, slinging his backpack off his shoulder and unzipping it as he went.

It seemed Dustin and the Demadog were set to reach Max at the same time! But Dustin withdrew a small, rectangular item from his backpack, and threw it hard.

The object flew up and over Max, and landed between her and the Demadog, which slid to a stop, and set about hastily examining the object.

"Nougat, bitch!" Dustin shouted as he reached Max, and helped her

stand up. The two started stumbling back down the road, but they were going too slow.

The Demadog's face split open and inhaled the candy bar, then the beast turned back towards the party and started running.

It was bearing down on Max and Dustin, face open to show its countless teeth.

Dusting threw another candy bar at the monster, but this time it ignored the shiny silver package.

"Hurry up!" Mike screamed in desperation. But he knew it was no use. Max and Dustin were too far behind, and the Demadog was almost upon them.

And suddenly the street was flooded with yellow light. There was a roar, and a dull ford LTD flew down the street. It swerved around Mike, Will, and Lucas, and drove straight toward Max and Dustin.

Dustin let out a loud yell, and pulled Max out of the path of the car.

The Demadog was frozen in confusion at the sudden noise and light. It looked like a demonic deer-in-headlights.

And then there came a loud, sickening crash! and the Demadog flew through the air, and landed with a dull crunch over ten yards away.

The car quickly reversed over to Max and Dustin. Mike and the others ran over, hearts racing.

The driver window of the LTD slid down, and Will's brother, Jonathan, stuck his head out.

"Get in!"

Without hesitation, Mike, Will, and Lucas wrenched the doors open and rushed into the backseat.

Dustin helped Max get in the passenger seat, then squeezed into the back himself.

"W-what are you d-doing here?!" Will asked, out of breath.

"What, no thank you?" Jonathan asked, sweeping his somewhat messy brow hair out of his slightly odd-looking eyes. "You think our mom wouldn't be out of her mind with worry all night? I volunteered to watch Mike's house from my car."

"Creepy" Max muttered through gritted teeth.

"You volunteered?!" Mike asked.

Jonathan shrugged. "Yeah, why not? Only I fell asleep at around 10:50. . . Max's scream woke me up. Thank God it did, too. I thought all those Teen Demagoran things were dead?!"

"Demadogs," Dustin said. "And they were. . . Except the one I saved in my freezer that escaped a few hours ago."

"You what?!"

"I didn't know it was still alive!" Dustin said crossly.

"You were trying to see my sister!" Mike gasped, his mind still on why Jonathan had volunteered.

"I- what? Never mind that! Tell me everything!" Jonathan said.

Before anyone could answer, there came a tap tap tap on Jonathan's window. Everyone jumped.

But it was just a neighbor.

"Is everything alright? I heard a crash, and the front of your car is all dinged up. Gonna need a new windshield too." The man, who looked to be in his late fifties, motioned towards the front of the car. The windshield indeed was covered in cracks.

"Uuuhhh, sorry, sir. I was just driving my friends home, and we must've hit a deer or something. I didn't see it at all! But we're all fine, thanks." Jonathan licked his lips.

"Gee, I don't have a darn clue what you could've hit myself. There's

not a dang thing in sight!" The man said, and he looked up and down the dark street, silver hair leaning in the moonlight.

Jonathan nodded slowly. "Y-yeah! Strange, isn't it?"

"Eh, stranger things have happened" the man shrugged, then caught sight of Max and leaned forward. "Well hold on, now! That young ladies leg is bleeding!"

Max smiled painfully at the man. "S-skating accident. I'll be fine."

The man nodded slowly. "Well, if you're sure you're alright. . . It's late, you should take these kids home."

Jonathan nodded again. "Thank you for your concern. Take care, sir."

The man smiled, and began to hobble off back toward his house. Jonathan let out a sigh of relief, and rolled up his window.

"That was close!" He said as he started to drive slowly down the street.

Lucas, however, had other things on his mind. "How, after everything, is that Demadog not dead?!"

"What do you mean?" Jonathan asked.

"It survived Elle and the Gate closing and Dustin's freezer, and you heard that guy! The Demadog is nowhere in sight! And you hit it with your freaking car!"

"So. . . Where is it, then?" Will asked.

"Let's not find out" Jonathan responded, and he stepped on the gas.

The old man watched the car packed with kids drive away. A bemused expression crossed his face as he again tried to figure out what on earth they could possibly have hit?!

But he could still see nothing in the poorly lit street, and the cold was starting to get to him, so he heaved a sigh, shrugged his shoulders,

and turned back towards his house.

But an odd, gurgling sound from the side of his house caught his attention

"Oh, what now?" He asked aloud, believing it to be yet another burst pipe (he'd already had two that month). The man wandered over to the side of his house, and peered into the pitch black shadows.

He saw nothing, and was about to turn back to his front door when the sound came again.

"Alright, ya little bugger. . ." The man growled, and he walked slowly into the darkness. "What are you?"

The gurgling was replaced with a hiss, and something flew through the air and toppled the man.

His shrieks went unheard by the rest of the neighborhood. All the neighbors were tucked safely away in bed, without any monsters to worry them.

Hey peeps! I just wanted to thank you again for reading, to apologize for that terrible pun (I can't help myself sometimes), and to remind you to please leave a comment about your thoughts on my fic so far, or to give me suggestions, ask me questions, or really say anything else you want.

I have a week off from school, so it's likely that chapters 5 and 6 will be posted soon, so stay tuned!

5. Chapter 5: The Ordinary World

Hey guys! Sorry that it's been so long since I last updated this. I had a lot going on. But here's chapter five! To tell you the truth, I'm not that fond of this chapter. I mean, it does everything I wanted it to do, but it doesn't quite feel right. But I decided to post it anyways, because the idea of starting over and rewriting the whole chapter gave me an ulcer. So here you go! Lather, rinse, slap, repeat, and enjoy!

"THERE YOU GO, MAX. THAT SHOULD do it," Joyce said as she finished securing a bandage onto Max's knee.

"Now, would somebody please, please tell me what's going on?"

"Mom... Just, please don't freak out" Jonathan said quietly. "One of the Demo-dogs is still alive."

"Somehow" Dustin snorted.

"Wh- I don't understand..." Joyce stood up and ran a hand through her hair. "I thought the gate closed? I-I thought they couldn't survive here without that... that thing that had you under its control" she looked at Will, who as on the couch next to Mike.

Will nodded slowly. He was staring determinedly at his hands. "It should've been dead... But we think that since Dustin kept what he thought was the Demo-dog's body in his freezer, the cold protected it from the effects of the gate closing."

Joyce looked exasperatedly at Dustin. "Why the hell would you think that was a good idea?"

"Hey, I'm sorry!" Dustin said defensively. "I thought it was dead. I saw it as an opportunity for a 'new' scientific discovery."

"B-but wait! It still shouldn't have survived, right? Even if it somehow survived Eleven closing the gate, a-and Eleven using her powers on it, it still doesn't have a connection to the Mind Flayer, right?"

Joyce shakily pulled a pack of cigarettes out of her pocket. She fumbled with the lid, pulled one out, and stuck it haphazardly between her teeth.

"Where's my damn lighter?" She muttered as she began to pat herself down. She still didn't normally smoke, but she always kept a pack on her in case of stressful circumstances.

"Well. . . It does have a connection..." Mike said, glancing at Will. The brown haired boy looked up at his mother.

"Mom, you remember when you burned the Mind Flayer's virus out of me, right?"

"Of course I do!" Joyce said as she pulled a small lighter out of her back pocket and brought the flame up to the white stick between her lips. "It was one of the most terrifying things I've **ever** done!"

"Well, remember that the virus didn't die. It was just driven out. It's still in Hawkins. And that virus was a part of the Mind Flayer."

Joyce took a long pull on her cigarette. "Are-are you sure?"

Lucas nodded. "El came to talk to us. She said she'd seen the Demo-dog and the Mind Flayer- or its virus- the same way she does when she uses her powers to find people."

Joyce shook her head and took another pull. Pale smoke floated freely around her head. "So, what happened next?"

"We went to Max's house and told her about all of that." Dustin took off his hat and popped his arm. "We were on our way back to Mike's house with her when the Demo-dog attacked us."

"We were actually getting away from it," Max piped up, and she wiped a strand of red hair out of we face, "but I was in damned slippers and tripped." She gestured to her knees.

"It would've gotten me, but Dustin distracted it with a three musketeers!" She beamed at him, and Dustin's face broke out into a stupid grin.

"And then," Will said, "then Jonathan came out of nowhere and rammed it with his car!"

"Too bad it didn't kill it" Jonathan said. He was standing in a corner of the living room. I was the same place where Joyce had taken an axe to the wall more than a year earlier.

"It's still alive?!" Joyce said, horrified. The five boys and one girl all nodded morosely.

"We have to tell Hopper! An-an-and Steve! He's helped us with this sort of thing before, right? We need to warn everyone who can do something and believe us! Nancy, and that detective you two talked to when you got Hawkins Lab shut down!"

"Mom! Calm down" Jonathan strode across the room and grabbed her shoulders. "Hopper already knows, OK. We do need to tell him what happened, but it's three in the morning. We can't do anything now. And that detective guy made it clear that he doesn't want to talk to us again."

"But we need a plan! We can't just sit here and do nothing!"

"Mom, it'll be OK. We're all here. We have weapons. This can wait another few hours. But Will, Mike, Max, Dustin and Lucas are going to need sleep. Hell, I need sleep. You definitely need sleep. Just trust me, ok?"

Joyce paused for a moment, then nodded. She stuffed the end of her cigarette into an ashtray on the table, and hugged Jonathan.

"Thank you for being there to save them!"

Jonathan nodded. "It's alright, mom. Go get some sleep. We'll all go talk to Hopper and Steve in the morning."

Joyce wiped her face. "You'll get everyone else to bed?"

"Of course. Go on, now. We'll all still be here when you wake up."

Joyce smiled sadly and shuffled off to her room. Her door closed with a quiet clunk, and Jonathan turned to the others.

"Ok, we need to get you sorted out. Max, you should take the couch. Lucas, you can stay in the living room, too. Mike, you can stay with Will in his room. You two were supposed to spend the night anyway."

Jonathan paused briefly, counting them all and thinking. "Dustin, you stay in here with Max and Lucas. Keep them from getting up to any funny business- joking, guys, joking."

His face turned serious. "I want you all try try and get some sleep. You'll only get a couple of hours. I'll get up at 6:45 and make us all coffee and breakfast. Then I'll wake you guys up, call your parents, and tell them that you all woke up early and came over to my house."

He stared at them all for a moment, then smiled. "alright. I'll get you guys some blankets. Try to get comfy."

Mike yawned as he crawled into the small nest of blankets next to Will's bed. He glanced up and saw the other boy was watching him.

"This is pretty crazy, huh? I thought with the gate closed and Hawkins Lab shut down, we'd be done with all this strange, supernatural stuff."

Will nodded. "Yeah, it's all freaky..." His voice trailed off, and Will rolled over to stare at the ceiling.

"Will..." Mike began cautiously. "Will, I- I can't help but think about what you were saying to me earlier... When we were watching Star Wars before the others showed up."

Will said nothing.

"You said something like a I wouldn't understand what you were going through..."

Will's breath caught in his throat.

"I just want you to know that you can tell me, you can talk to me, about anything. I'll listen, and I won't abandon you. I promise."

Will let out a shuddering sigh. "How... How could you understand

and accept me for it when my own family won't even do that?"

Mike didn't know how to respond. He still had no clue what was going on with Will. "What do you mean? Surely whatever this is, Joyce and Jonathan wouldn't care. They spent over a year trying desperately to save you from the Upside Down and the Mind Flayer!"

"Not... Not them. My dad, Lonnie."

Mike grunted. He had never cared for Will's father. Well, nobody really did these days.

"What does Lonnie say about you?"

"I'm... I'm sorry, Mike. Can we just... Not talk about this right now? I'm really tired..."

Mike nodded. "Yeah. Sorry. Of course."

Will pulled his blankets up under his chin, and rolled so he was facing away from Mike. Tears slid across his face.

Mike too rolled over. He closed his eyes, ready to go to sleep. Before he drifted away, he said one last thing to Will.

"You're my best friend. When you're ready, I'll listen to you. I'll understand. I know what kind of person you are. You're the kind of person who tells me the truth about a roll against a Demogorgan that I didn't see. You're the kind of person who would put yourself at risk to help the party. Whatever it is you think I won't understand, just know that I'll always stand by you..."

Will nodded silently, but said nothing. Both boys stared into the darkens walls of the room before gradually sliding into sleep.

Jonathan jerked awake as his alarm radio blared on.

"come into this room
Come into this gloom
See the red light rinsing
Another shutter slut... wincing"

He groaned and hit the off button. Silence fell in the room once more. Jonathan had barely gotten two hours of sleep, and he longed to fade back into dreams for the rest of the day.

But he forced himself to roll out of bed, turn on a light, and get dressed. Jonathan threw on a pair of jeans and a dull flannel jacket, then left to go make coffee and eggs.

The sun was already up, although just barely. Most of the sky was still a dark, paranormal purple. As Jonathan entered the kitchen, he glanced into the living room and saw that Dustin, Max, and Lucas were all fast asleep.

The latter two were predictably close to one another. Max was on the couch, and Lucas was only a foot away, sleeping at the foot of the sofa. They were both on their sides, facing each other. Jonathan glanced around and saw that Dustin was all the way across the room from them, huddled up under a blanket.

Jonathan turned away and quickly put the pot on, and took two cartons of eggs out of the fridge. He grabbed a frying pan, turned on the stove, and went about making breakfast.

"Mnnnnn J-Jonathan?"

The eldest Byers child looked up and saw his mother walking into the kitchen, rubbing her eyes.

"Hey, mom. Morning. How you doing?"

She stretched and yawned. "T-tired. Barely slept. Is that b-breakfast?"

Jonathan nodded. "Yeah. And the coffee will be ready soon. Could you go start waking everyone up?"

Soon the kitchen was full of the sound of eggs frying, tired teens yawning and groaning, and coffee pouring into mugs. It was almost normal...

It wasn't long before everyone had eaten their eggs, and the chatter started up again.

"So who do we find first, Steve or Hopper?" Max asked. She looked much better. Her knees were healing nicely, and Will had managed to find her some old clothes of his that fit rather nicely. It was just a pair of dark brown trousers and a faded David Bowie shirt, but Max had gladly traded her torn pajamas and house coat for them.

"Obviously we should go see Steve first!" Dustin piped up. Everyone stared at him for a moment. "Because Hopper already knows what's going on, and Steve doesn't!" Dustin said, blushing slightly.

"But Jim is better equipped to deal with it, Dustin" Joyce said.

"Why, because he's an adult? Have you seen Steve fight one of those things? He takes that nail bat, and **BAM!**" Dustin mimed hitting a ball out of the park. "All Hopper does, no offense, is shoot them. And we all know how effective that is."

Jonathan let out a sigh of exasperation. "Let's split up. Mom, you take Lucas, and Max to see Hopper at the station. I'll take Mike, Will, and Dustin to Steve's."

Joyce nodded slowly, then checked her watch. "Oh, damn! It's 7:30! The station opens in five minutes! We gotta go!"

"Shit!" Lucas said, checking his own watch. "My parents will have just woken up. We need to call them so they don't freak out that I'm gone."

"Alright, I'll call everyone's parents. You guys go wait in the car." Jonathan threw the empty plates and mugs in the sink as all the kids ran outside. He then made his way over to the phone on the wall.

He would call Mike's parents first, just because he could remember the number easiest. Jonathan dialed, then waited. After two rings, there was a click.

"Hello, Wheeler residence, how may I help you?"

"Mrs. Wheeler? Hi, it's Jonathan Byers."

"Oh, hello Jonathan! Did you need anything? is something wrong?"

"Oh, no. I'm sorry to bother you, ma'am, it's just that Mike and Will woke up early and walked over to my house, but neither of them could remember if they left you a note, so I'm calling just in case to let you know so you don't worry."

"Oh, I don't think they did leave a note. Mike certainly didn't tell me about it, so I'll be having a talk with him once he gets home. But thank you for letting me know. Don't let he and Will get in too much trouble today!"

"Of course not, Mrs. Wheeler. I hope you have a lovely day. Bye-bye, now."

Jonathan clicked the phone down, and sighed, then picked it back up. Only three more of these calls, then off to the Harrington residence...

Lucas was gripping the car seat tightly. His knuckles were white, and his face was sweaty. What's more, he was panting very quickly.

Max looked at him and rolled her eyes.

"She's just worried," Max said reassuringly as she took Lucas's hand. "We all are."

"If she goes any faster, I'm revoking your Zoomer title and giving it to her!"

Max tried to grin at this, but instead winced slightly. One of her knees had just bumped into the back of the passenger seat, and Lucas really did have a firm grip.

"We're almost there!" Joyce said as she barreled down the nearly empty streets of Hawkins main town. "Just another two blocks..."

Lucas gritted his teeth anxiously as Joyce pressed the accelerator, a determined look on her face. She skidded down the road towards the police station, then slammed on the brakes and slid into a parking space with much squeaking of tires.

"Everyone out!"

Lucas gratefully dove out of the car, but Max, whose knees were still badly scraped, took a little more time getting out.

But Joyce was already pushing open the police station door as Lucas and Max started walking away from the car. The two kids hurried over to the door and tripped inside.

"Flo, please, please don't patronize me. I need to talk to Hopper. Where is he?"

"I'm sorry, Joyce, but you're gonna have to wait. He's out on a call."

"What call, Flo? You just opened fifteen minutes ago!"

"The station is open all night for emergencies, Joyce."

Mrs. Byers gritted her teeth. "Flo, I'm serious. This is important."

"More important than one of your neighbors being torn to shreds by an animal last night?"

Max and Lucas stared at each other, horrified.

"What did you say?!" They both shouted, running up to the front desk where Flo, Hopper's old secretary, was sitting.

"I said that last night an animal attacked one of your neighbors. Well, maybe not yours, but close enough. Poor man was set to turn 62 next week."

"Flo, please, this might be connected to what I need to tell Hopper!"

"Well, you can always talk to one of Hopper's deputies." Flo scratched absently at her short, curly, dark brown hair.

"No no, it has to be Hopper. Please, Flo, just tell me where he is!" Joyce leaned forward with her hands on Flo's desk, staring expectantly at the lady.

But Flo just shook her head. "I'm sorry, Joyce, but I can't tell you where he is. If you're not a witness, you can't know anything about the crime until an official statement is released to the the public."

All three of them opened their mouths, but Flo cut across them "and even if you WERE a witness, I can't guarantee that it would be Hopper who interviewed you and took your statements. I'm sorry, but if you really want to talk to him, and really don't want to be helpful, you'll have to wait for him to get back."

"Well how long is that going to be?!" Joyce asked heatedly.

"How on earth should I know? I've never been to the crime scene. Could take hours. He hasn't even had his 'coffee and contemplation' time yet, so add another hour on top of that."

Joyce ran a hand through her hair. "Fine!" She marched away from Flo's desk. "Fine!"

Max and Lucas stared at each other, then ran after her. Joyce threw the station door open and stomped out.

"Bitch!" She shouted.

"Mrs. Byers!" Lucas called, running towards Joyce and her car. "Mrs. Byers, we can still find Hopper!"

Joyce fumbled briefly with a cigarette pack before lighting up. "How? You heard Flo, she won't tell us where Hopper is, and I doubt any of the other cops will either."

"Yeah, but we think we might know where the crime scene he's at is!" Max said. "It's probably near where the Demo-dog attacked us last night! I mean, that can't be a coincidence, can it?"

Joyce lept up. "You do? Where is it?"

"Just a couple of streets down from Mike's house. C'mon, we'll show you!"

"Alright, Mike, Will and I will go talk to Steve. You stay in the car" Dustin nodded at Jonathan.

"What, why?"

"Because you stole his girl! Steve probably won't want to talk if you're around" Dustin rolled his eyes. "At least, not until we've explained to him the situation."

"I didn't steal her! She doesn't belong to anyone... Nancy just... made a choice" Jonathan gripped the steering wheel.

"Alright, whatever. But Steve still isn't gonna wanna talk with you there."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah" Jonathan waved his hand. "Whatever. Just hurry up, ok?"

Dustin and Will opened the doors and climbed out of the car, but Mike stayed in the front seat.

"You guys go on. I want to talk to Jonathan about something" Mike called through the window. Dustin shrugged, and started to make his way up to the Harrington porch.

Mike watched as Will and Dustin knocked on the front door, then stood and waited for a moment before the door opened and they walked inside.

"So... What did you want to talk to me about?" Jonathan asked, his voice tinged with curiosity.

"It's about Will... Well, more his father, really" Mike said, still watching the house.

"Who, Lonnie? I can tell you right now that that son of a bitch may be Will's father, but he sure as hell isn't Will's family!"

"Why? What did he do?" Mike turned and looked at Jonathan, who's face showed signs of anger.

"Well, outside of the verbal abuse, Lonnie kept trying to force Will to do things that Will didn't like, because Lonnie wanted him to be normal" Jonathan sneered slightly as he said the word.

"And he was never really there for Will, either. The only reason he came to the funeral last year in the first place was because he wanted

to use Will's death to get money. Something about suing the quarry?"

Mike sat in silence for a moment, taking that all in. He could see why Will had sounded so...damaged when they had talked last night. But this still didn't explain everything that Will had said.

"You... you said that there was verbal abuse, too?"

Jonathan chuckled sourly. "Oh yeah. Lonnie loved to criticize Will. Used to call him a 'queer fag' because Will wasn't boring and normal like everyone else!"

"Was he?" Mike asked without thinking.

"Was he what?"

"Nevermind... It doesn't matter." Mike blushed. Why did he care if Will was queer? He probably wasn't anyway... right?

The two boys sat in silence for a few minutes. Jonathan yawned and rubbed his eyes. "We should've stopped for more coffee or something" he groaned.

A knock came from Mike's window, and the Wheeler boy jumped.

"Jesus, Dustin!" Mike said when he rolled down the window. "What is it? Where are Will and Steve?"

"They're inside. Jonathan, Steve wants you to back into the driveway and up to the garage. He says he's going to need your trunk."

"Jonathan" Steve nodded stiffly as the eldest Byers stepped out of his car.

Jonathan said nothing, and instead tilted his head, eyeing the interior of Steve's garage. It was pretty normal. There were some power tools in a workstation, and a few boxes for storage, as well as some gardening equipment.

"You, uh, said you needed my trunk?" Jonathan asked heavily, finally turning back to Steve.

"Sure do." Steve strode over to the door leading from the garage into the house, and pressed a fist against a square black button next to it. The garage door began to close, leaving the four boys and Jonathan's car in the somewhat darkened garage.

"We've gotta defend ourselves, right?" Steve slid a hand through the high arches of his hair. "So I made more nail bats. Now, my parents are out right now, so it should be safe to load them into the trunk, but my car is in the shop today, so it looks like we're gonna have to use your car for the time being."

"And, uh, where are the nail bats?"

Steve scratched at his ear. "Well, that's the thing... I hid them all around the house."

"How many?" Will asked.

"Seven. But we'll only take five. One for me, one for Joyce, one for Max, one for Nancy," Steve shot a look over at Jonathan, "and I guess one for you..."

"What about me?" Dustin asked hopefully.

"Oh, no!" Steve said sternly. "No, you don't get a nail bat. I don't want you accidentally hitting yourself or someone else in the face!"

Dustin's face fell slightly. "I wanted a weapon, though. It was my party that the Demo-dog went after last night!"

Steve looked around the garage, then walked over to a workstation in the corner, grabbed a bottle, and tossed it to Dustin.

"There you go! Bear spray! It's like mace, but made to ward off animal attacks. It sprays something like 20 feet away, too. You see that Demo-dog, and you shoot it right in the face with that!"

Dustin held up the spray can with an awed look on his face. "Sweeeetttt!" He grinned.

Steve walked over to the wall and snatched up a stepladder. "The first bat," he said as he stared up at the ceiling, "Is in the attic. Will, one of

them is under my bed. Jonathan, another is in the laundry room behind the washer. Mike, go into my back yard and get the one under the bush at the right side of the patio."

The boys all moved quickly to follow these instructions. Dustin, however, looked up at Steve expectantly. "What about me?"

"You are going to stay with me" Steve said as he placed the step stool under the attic door and stepped onto it.

"Oh... Alright!" Dustin grinned. "Question: why aren't we getting all seven?"

"Because," Steve said as he carefully pulled open the attic door, "one of them is in my car, and I want to keep one here at home just in case..."

Steve started to climb up into the attic. "you know," he called, "this parasite virus thing... If it can control people, how do we know it hasn't taken anyone over yet?"

"We don't" Dustin replied. "But El told us last night that she saw it, which means that it hasn't found someone as of about 8 hours ago. And I don't think it would take control of some random person. It needs someone important like Hopper or Joyce. Somebody who knows what's going on to act as a spy."

"Got it!" Steve called, and Dustin heard him walking back towards the door. "We'll throw this one in the trunk, then you and me will go get the last one out of the guest bathroom."

Steve emerged from the attic door and carefully lowered himself onto the step stool.

"You hid a weapon in your guest bathroom?" Dustin giggled.

"Yeah, under the sink. No one uses that bathroom, so I thought it'd be safe there."

Steve smiled at Dustin, then hopped down from the stool and placed the bat in Jonathan's trunk.

"I guess we can only hope that the parasite doesn't find anyone important to inhabit, right?"

"Yeah... Definitely" Dustin said quietly.

Eleven didn't mean to fall asleep. She was terrified that if she did, she'd encounter the Demo-dog again.

But as she laid in the couch, the only thing she dreamed of was Mike and Hopper doing a random Irish dance together.

And this was what the parasite was waiting for. It was time to strike. For who had bested the Upside Down both times it had made moves against earth? This little, seemingly insignificant girl! She could not be allowed to remain as a player for the other side.

So it had watched her, waited for the opportune moment. It watched with triumph as her eyes slowly closed and her body slumped onto the cushions.

The parasite moved like smoke through the Forrest surrounding the cabin. It passed right over the trip wire without making so much as a sound.

The sun was barely up, so the misty form of the parasite moved through the shadows unseen by the inhabitants of the forest. It reached the front door quickly and slid under the crack.

It emerged into the living room and made its way quickly over to the sleeping form of the girl. It slipped soundlessly into her mouth, and she breathed it in raggedly.

The last bit of the Mind Flayer's parasitic virus flew into Eleven's mouth, and she jerked awake. She stared wildly around, her chest rising and falling quickly. Droplets of sweat formed on her forehead.

"Mike?" She gasped. It was too hot. Had she been having a nightmare? She couldn't remember. She got up and stumbled towards the front door. She undid the latch and walked outside in her bare feet. The cool air washed over her, and she relaxed.

And back in the Upside Down, the massive, ethereal beast that was the Mind Flayer roared in triumph. Now it has a way to get back into Hawkins. This little girl, once the parasite had fully taken her over, would reopen the gate. This little girl would bring about the end of Hawkins, Indiana, the United States, and the world at large.